



The Seventieth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,846th Concert

Kate Vetter Cain, soprano
Ole Hass, tenor
with
Harmonious Blacksmith

Presented in honor of
Italian Master Drawings from the
Wolfgang Ratjen Collection: 1525–1835

September 25, 2011
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

“Prima la musica, dopo le parole?”

Italian arias from Monteverdi to Haydn

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

From *L'Orfeo*

“Vi ricorda” / “In un fiorito prato” / “Tu se’ morta”

Jacopo Peri (1561–1633)

“Tutto ‘l dì piango”

Antonio Cesti (1623–1669)

From *Oronthea*

“Addio Corindo”

Dario Castello (c. 1590–c. 1658)

From *Sonate concertate in stil moderno*, Book 2

Sonata no. 12 à 3

Monteverdi

From *L'incoronazione di Poppea*

Duet: “Pur ti miro”

Monteverdi

From *Scherzi musicali*

“Zefiro torna”

INTERMISSION

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

From *Nine German Arias*

“Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle”

Handel

From *La Resurrezione*

Recitative: “Di quai novi portenti”

Aria: “Ecco il sol ch’esce dal mare”

Handel

From *Xerxes*

Duet: “Troppo oltraggi la mia fede”

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)

Concerto in G Minor, RV 103

Allegro ma cantabile

Largo

Allegro non molto

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Duet: “Come il foco”

The Musicians

KATE VETTER CAIN

Praised by *The Washington Post* for her “sweetness of timbre and vocal power,” soprano Kate Vetter Cain has performed at the Ash Lawn-Highland Festival, Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, Brevard Music Festival, Caramoor Festival Opera, Gamper Festival of Contemporary Music, and Tanglewood Music Festival, and has earned acclaim as a soloist with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, ‘Rebel’ Baroque Orchestra, and Washington Bach Consort. She has sung principal roles in operas by Britten, Donizetti, Handel, Monteverdi, and Mozart, under conductors Will Crutchfield, David Effron, Christopher Larkin, Kenneth Slowik, and Ransom Wilson. A 2007 finalist in the Vocal Arts Society of Washington Discovery Series Competition, she has performed in recital on the “Promising Artists of the 21st Century Series” in San José, Costa Rica, and with pianist Nino Sanikidze at the Cleveland Art Song Festival. She has also appeared as a soloist in oratorios by Beethoven, Mozart, and Vivaldi with the Charlottesville Summer Chamber Symphony; the Masterworks Chorus and Orchestra of Washington, DC; New York’s Trinity Church; and Yale University Bach Society.

OLE HASS

Born in Hamburg, Germany, tenor Ole Hass was a member of the boys’ choir at St. Michael’s Cathedral in Hamburg, where he sang with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Hermann Prey, Peter Schreier and other noted artists. At home in the Washington, DC area, Hass has performed as soloist with Cantate Chamber Singers, the newly formed City Choir of Washington under Robert Shafer, the New Dominion Chorale, and the Washington Bach Consort. His performances as Evangelist in Bach’s *St. John Passion* at the National Cathedral and in the Christmas Oratorio at Strathmore Hall received critical acclaim. Recent song recitals include Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* on the DACOR recital series in Washington as well as a performance of

Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* with guitarist Jaume Torrent. Hass holds a DMA in vocal performance from the University of Maryland, College Park, and serves as editor for German-language music journals for RIPM (Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals).

HARMONIOUS BLACKSMITH

Uniquely focused on the connection between composition and improvisation in Renaissance and baroque music, Harmonious Blacksmith looks back to the age-old practices of improvising dance music and ornamenting songs. The name of the ensemble comes from the title of a famous set of harpsichord variations by George Frederic Handel. Although the title was given by Handel's publisher, it provides a resonant image—not just of a blacksmith whistling while working, but also of musicians shaping harmonies into works of art. The group's name also alludes to Pythagoras' ancient discovery of acoustics, as he passed a blacksmith's forge and noticed the higher and lower pitches of smaller and larger hammers striking the anvil.

JOSEPH GASCHO

Cofounder with Justin Godoy of Harmonious Blacksmith, harpsichordist Joseph Gascho enjoys a varied career as a baroque keyboardist and conductor, performing as a soloist and collaborative artist; conducting operas, orchestras, and choirs; editing and arranging scores; and teaching and lecturing. He has won numerous grants and prizes, including first prize in the 2002 Jurow International Harpsichord Competition. In addition to numerous performances in the United States, he served as *claveciniste repetiteur* and directed a chamber music program at the Academie d'Art-Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence, France. A 2010 recipient of the doctor of music degree at the University of Maryland, Gascho teaches at the George Washington University and at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music's Baroque Performance Institute.

WILLIAM SIMMS

Equally adept on the guitar, baroque guitar, lute, and theorbo, William Simms holds degrees from the Peabody Conservatory of Music and the College of Wooster. He appears regularly with the early music ensembles Modern Musick, Olde Friends Concert Artists, and Opera Lafayette. Simms is a founding member of the baroque ensemble La Rocinante. In demand as a continuo player, he has performed numerous operas and oratorios, including performances with the Cleveland Opera and New York State Baroque. He serves on the faculties of Hood College, where he is founder and director of the Hood College Early Music Ensemble, the Interlochen Center for the Arts, and Mount Saint Mary's College. He has recorded for the Centaur, Dorian, and Eclatra labels.

DOUG POPLIN

Violoncellist Doug Poplin performs regularly in venues throughout the metropolitan Washington, DC, area as a recitalist, chamber musician, and ensemble member. His artistic flexibility includes both early music—performing and recording on the Dorian label with the Bach Sinfonia and concertizing with the Washington Bach Consort on baroque violoncello—and experimental music on electric 'cello with the avant-garde ensemble BLK W/ BEAR. Poplin received his bachelor of music degree from the University of Minnesota and continued his studies at the University of Maryland, where he was an orchestra fellow and worked with the Guarneri String Quartet. His teachers include Kenneth Slowik of the Smithsonian Institution and Harvey Shapiro of the Juilliard School.

JUSTIN GODOY

Justin Godoy's recorder playing has been praised as "sublime" (*The Washington Post*) with "nimble articulation, technical bravura, and range of expressive nuance" (*The Baltimore Sun*). In addition to his work with Harmonious Blacksmith, Godoy has performed with many leading period ensembles, including the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra, Hesperus, Tempesta di Mare, and La Donna Musicale. As a winner of the Frank Huntington Beebe Grant, Godoy spent two years performing, teaching, and studying in Holland. He studied recorder with Saskia Coolen, Gwyn Roberts, and Heikoter Schegget, and composition with Nicholas Maw. He is president of the Boston Recorder Society.

LESLIE NERO

A native of Washington, DC, Leslie Nero was professionally active for fifteen years in Ontario and Quebec, Canada, playing in several orchestras. Upon returning to the Washington metropolitan area, she began playing as a freelance violinist and violist with both modern and baroque ensembles. She often performs with the Bach Sinfonia, the Folger Consort, Modern Musick, Opera Lafayette, the Vivaldi Project, and the Washington Bach Consort. She also enjoys teaching violin to many eager fourth- and fifth-grade students in the Alexandria, Virginia, public schools.

Program Notes

This concert, a compendium of Italian and German arias from Monteverdi to Haydn, forms a musical parallel to *Italian Master Drawings from the Wolfgang Ratjen Collection: 1525–1835*, an exhibition of sixty-five superb drawings assembled by the European private collector Wolfgang Ratjen (1943–1997), which remains on view in the West Building through November 27, 2011. The splendors of Italian draftsmanship from the late Renaissance to the height of the neoclassical movement are showcased in works by many of the most important artists of the period, from Giulio Romano (1499–1546) to Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (1727–1804). Ratjen, one of the most discerning collectors in the twentieth century, sought outstanding works by lesser-known artists as well as some of the few first-rate drawings by famous artists that were still on the market in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Following that example, the musicians have chosen not only arias from acknowledged masterworks, such as Monteverdi's *L' Orfeo* and Handel's *Xerxes*, but also delightful surprises from little-known operas of Peri and Cesti and from the instrumental works of Dario Castello.

The composer of vocal music achieves perfection by striking a balance between a recitative, homophonic style on one hand and a more florid, melismatic, and sometimes polyphonic style on the other. Some periods in history have favored one style over the other. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Florentine Camerata, a group of theorists and composers, set out to recreate the way the ancient Greeks were supposed to have incanted their prose and poetry, a style that the Camerata believed should be a cross between spoken recitation and singing. Their *stile recitativo* (recitative style) became the basic method for composing their monodies and culminated in the first operas. This concert follows the historical sweep from the *stile recitativo*, as it manifested itself in the seventeenth century, through a reversal of styles during the period of florid baroque opera, and back to the straightforwardness of the classical period, when the enlightenment brought renewed interest in ancient Greece and Rome.

Composers with a mind for musical revolution have often turned to the story of Orpheus, the first great musician of antiquity, and this concert begins and concludes with excerpts from two treatments of the subject. Jacopo Peri, a member of the Florentine Camerata, is credited with writing the first opera, *Euridice*, in 1600. As the title suggests, it is the story as told from the perspective of Orpheus' wife. Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, first performed only seven years later, set the standard and still has a foothold in opera repertory today. In the scene consisting of three arias at the outset of this program, Orpheus is rejoicing, together with a group of shepherds, in his recent marriage to Eurydice, when Sylvia, a companion of Eurydice, arrives and reports that Eurydice has been fatally bitten by a snake. Orpheus grieves and swears to follow Eurydice into the underworld, either to bring her back or to stay there with her.

Peri's setting of a sonnet by Petrarch (1304–1374), “Tutto 'l dì piango,” is another lover's lament. It gives a fitting chromatic and expressive setting to a melancholic poem.

Antonio Cesti lived a double life as Franciscan friar and opera composer and singer. His opera *Orontea* was written for the carnival season of 1656, when he was employed by the Archduke of Tyrol. Not long thereafter, Cesti was called back to Rome by his order and installed as a tenor in the choir of the Sistine Chapel. In the opera, a beautiful young man (Alidoro) arrives wounded at the court of queen Orontea, who soon forsakes her plans to stay single forever. Silandra, a courtesan, is also attracted to the handsome stranger, and in the aria “Addio Corindo” she tells her lover, Corindo, to leave her alone, so that she may shower her favors on Alidoro.

Dario Castello was engaged as an instrumentalist at the Basilica di San Marco in Venice, working with Monteverdi. His two books of sonatas were first published in the 1620s, and were reprinted many times, attesting to the popularity and influence of his compositions. “In stil moderno” (in modern style) describes what is now called baroque style, as opposed to the older Renaissance style. Like most of Castello's sonatas, *Sonata 12* comprises a single movement, but it features strongly contrasting sections, epitomizing the dramatic nature of early Italian baroque music.

The duet “Pur ti miro” is the final aria in Monteverdi’s mature opera *L’incoronazione di Poppea*, composed in 1642. After Poppea has used her sensual charms to get what she wants and Nero has removed all obstacles between Poppea and himself (including his former wife, Ottavia, and his advisor, the philosopher Seneca), the two join for a deceptively sincere love duet.

Monteverdi’s collection of arias titled *Scherzi musicali* (Musical Jokes) includes the joyful serenade “Zefiro torna,” set over a ground bass for the continuo. Composed for two high voices, it is often performed by two tenors, but can be just as effective when sung by a tenor and a soprano.

As a salute to Wolfgang Ratjen, whose collection includes even more fine German drawings than Italian ones, the performers have included one of the German arias of Handel, a composer who has many Italian arias to his credit as well. While in England and in charge of the Italian opera at the Haymarket Theater in London, Handel set texts by the Hamburg senator Barthold Heinrich Brockes, an acquaintance from his student days in Halle. Handel excerpted nine arias from Brockes’ complete cantata texts, *Irdisches Vergnügen in Gott* (Earthly Joy in God), and set them for soprano voice, obbligato instrument, and continuo. The aria “Süße Stille, sanfte Quelle” meditates on the calming prospect of eternity.

Handel’s oratorio *La Resurrezione* comes from his time in Italy. It was produced in 1708 at the Roman palace of the marchese Francesco Maria Ruspoli, Handel’s patron at the time. Documents from the archive of the Fondo Ruspoli give ample detail about the production, including an elaborate stage set. The performance was guided by the famous violinist Arcangelo Corelli. Based primarily on the Gospel according to John, the oratorio describes the events from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, including the story of Christ’s descent into Hell. In the recitative “Di quai novi portent,” Saint John the Evangelist ponders on the upheaval of the elements at the death of Jesus. He then sings the aria “Ecco il sol ch’esce dal mare,” noting the rising sun as a possible sign of the coming resurrection of Christ.

The most famous aria from Handel's opera *Xerxes* is the serene "Ombra mai fu" (Never was a shade), sung by a castrato in Handel's time. King Xerxes' musings are soon interrupted by a comedy of errors, and calm is not restored until the end of the opera. Xerxes falls in love with Romilda, who in turn loves his brother Arsamene. In one of many twists and turns of the plot, Arsamene comes upon Romilda as she is about to leave, holding suitcases as well as a love letter to Xerxes (written by his wife, who has been hiding in men's clothes). Romilda and Arsamene engage in a sweet brawl in the form of the duet "Tropo oltraggi la mia fede."

Perhaps surprisingly, Vivaldi's *Concerto in G Minor* is not a work for a string ensemble and one or more soloists. The term concerto was more loosely applied by Vivaldi and his contemporaries—for example, vocal works that J. S. Bach titled *Concerti* we now call sacred cantatas. In the case of Vivaldi's RV 103, the instrumentation is that of a trio sonata, but the musical form closely follows a traditional concerto structure, alternating repetitions of the *ritornello* with contrasting musical episodes.

Haydn's last opera, *L'anima del filosofo ossia Orfeo ed Euridice*, was written in 1791, intended for performance at the same (rebuilt) London Haymarket Theatre where Handel had performed his Italian operas. However, the royal patent for the theater was denied and the performance cancelled, removing the need to apply finishing touches to the score. The first complete performance was given in Florence, Italy, in 1951. The libretto by Carlo Francesco Badini sets the classical tone, introducing Orpheus as the savior of Eurydice, which he does by taming the beasts of the forest with an aria. In response, Eurydice's father, Creonte, finally gives his permission for the two to marry. Euridice and Orpheus pledge eternal love to each other in the duet, "Come il facò," with which this evening's concert comes to a close.

Program notes by Joseph Gascho and Ole Hass

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

COVER: Francesco Zuccarelli, *Mountainous River Landscape with Bathers*,
National Gallery of Art, Washington, Wolfgang Ratjen Collection,
Patrons' Permanent Fund